

# “Skill Development of Engineering & Management students for Employability Enhancement through Communication improvement – Issues, Challenges and Way out”

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**ABSTRACT:** Speaking English clearly and confidently is an indispensable skill for any educated person, especially for the engineering students seeking employment. Teaching pronunciation to tertiary students poses specific challenges to the teacher in the classroom environment in the absence of well-equipped language labs. In order to improve the intelligibility of spoken English of rural students, teaching pronunciation, stress and intonation plays a crucial role. The large classrooms with varying levels of English language skills of students offer significant challenges to the language teachers and demand for innovative approaches for teaching the same. This paper presents some useful ways in which the Google classroom app issued in deploying assignments and monitoring the progress of students. It also analyses the specific issues and challenges faced by the teacher and the taught and suggests certain remedial measures for students to improve the intelligibility levels of their speech.

**Keywords:** Tertiary students, intelligibility, pronunciation, stress, intonation, Skill Development, Teaching Challenges

## INTRODUCTION :

English is the window of the world. 70% of the world’s population is speaking English and 80% of the books are printed in English. So English is a good tool to improve communication in the work place and also in the society. Students especially in the tertiary level i.e., students pursuing professional courses like Engineering and Management need additional attention in the area of pronunciation. An Engineer or Manager will be qualitative and efficient if he/she gets Proficiency in English. An English teacher also plays a key role in developing language skills in engineering students. They must adopt latest technology to teach English in the class room and to act as mentor, friend to facilitate learning. Most of the students are missing opportunity to work in multinational companies due to lack of language skills.

English is widely perceived in India as a valuable life and employability skill. Yet, the result of a global survey undertaken by EF Education First, suggests that out of a total of 54 countries that were surveyed, India ranked 14th under the English proficiency index with a third category level of “moderate proficiency” with countries above exhibiting “high” and “very high proficiency” levels. The potential market for English Language Training in India, therefore, is substantial. While there are a significant number of domestic and international organisations established in the English Language Training market, there are still a wide range of opportunities for new providers or existing providers to expand their presence in India. Through conducting primary and desk-based research, British council explores the market opportunities in India for UK service providers within the English language training space. The findings indicate that through the innovative use of new technologies, there are also opportunities for companies from related sectors, such as telecommunications and information technology (IT). The quality of English teaching in India is a big question mark. David Graddol in his book English Next India argues that India has to keep pace with global development of English or it may lose its edge over other developing countries. According to him, the spread of the language is being hindered by a shortage of English language teaching in schools. He opines that Indian universities fall far short of rival countries in the quality of teaching and research, and "poor English is one of the causes". Also, it is "impossible" to improve standards of English without addressing the problem of "very low levels of academic achievement" of students studying in government and private schools. What comes out very clearly from the extensive research undertaken on this subject is that English language will continue to play an important role in India. It is the secondary official language of India and is widely used in national, political and commercial communication. However, the worrying factor is the relatively low quality of education with a huge gap between academic teaching and employability requirement. Aspiring Minds, a company that focuses on assessing student

employability, after having surveyed 55,000 students in 2011 found that not even 3% were employable directly without further training by information technology (IT) companies. They also said that about 78% of those surveyed struggled in the English language<sup>2</sup>. The British Council in India has been doing a commendable job trying to bridge the skill gap in the English language training (ELT) market by working across the spectrum with consumers, government and business in India. They enjoy a strong brand image and presence across the country and work directly with stakeholders as a service provider and also partner British organisations including Cambridge ESOL for administering their International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examination in India. UK service providers may possibly look at exploring a partnership with them by integrating their product with the British Council offering, resulting in quicker time to market and achieving a wider pan-India reach.

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## **IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH FOR ENGINEERING & MANAGEMENT STUDENTS:**

Effective communication skills are essential for the emerging Engineers. They must be able to present their knowledge with an excellent standard of communication skills. In academic life, engineering students have to deal with the countless English lectures, labs, project reports in English. During the job seeking process in interviews, Group discussion, English plays a vital role in getting job. After getting job, they are required to work in groups. So being an engineer, he has to communicate with different people from various parts of the world. Engineering students will be good at English when teachers connect class rooms to the world to learn language effectively. Teachers should train the students to write E-mail, report

wiring, letter writing effectively as engineers are expected to be good at technical writing along with fluency and accuracy. These are very useful to get the job and to sustain the job.

So English is part of professional life.

### **PROBLEMS:**

The following are the major problems in engineering education system and in learning and teaching of English in engineering colleges.

1. The subject English is introduced in First year engineering only. So naturally students focus on core subjects and they neglect English. More ever, they are learning English from examination point of view in the semester system.
2. The syllabus and exam pattern are giving chance to develop written English but it should be emphasis on spoken English through task-based activities.
3. Most of the class rooms in engineering colleges are not equipped with overhead projector, computer etc. E-class rooms are introduced in some of the Engineering colleges in very limited way. Most of the Engineering colleges are far away from E-class room teaching.
4. English lab is the place where students can enhance their language skills. But in most of the colleges, language laboratories are not equipped with latest English software. The equipment is not maintained properly.
5. It is out of question to the English teacher to focus on each student as the class room contains 60 students. Actually the ideal class room will be with 40 students.
6. According to AICTE norms, students and teacher ration should be 15:1. But colleges are not recruiting sufficient faculty and they are showing fake faculty at the time of inspection.
7. If the teacher is competent in English, the students also will be competent in English. Most of the English teachers are not updating their knowledge in research area. It is countable the

Ph.D holders in English in every state. They not are focusing on doing Ph.D due to availability of limited seats in universities and financial problems.

8. The core subject teachers are using mother tongue to teach their subject instead of using English language. And most of the students are confining to class room teaching to learn English language and they are not participating in literal and other activities which are related to English. When they attend interviews, they feel nervous and come to know the importance of English.

### **SOLUTIONS PROPOSED FOR BETTER PRONUNCIATION**

1. English teacher should encourage and motivate students to develop English proficiency in students. They have to follow Direct method and Communicate approach in the class room. Teacher should be familiar with latest technology to teach English with Technology. He must know the latest trends in English language Teaching to make their teaching effective. They have to attend seminars, workshops in national and international level. They must read research papers and publish research papers in national and international journals to know latest trends in English language teaching and they must be active in research. If they are active in research, they can understand student's problems and they will find out the solutions for the language learning.

2. The subject English should be introduced in second, third and final years at least one semester in a year. Then the scope will be increased in learning language.

3. The syllabus should be framed with task-based activities and integrated language skills. The exam pattern should be changed from written to oral. At least 30 marks should be awarded for spoken skills out of 100 marks.

4. Audio-visual aids in teaching makes the student easier and interesting. So English teacher should not teach the entire syllabus in traditional class room. He should cover at least 50 % of the syllabus in E-class room by using power point presentation and latest technology.

#### **IMPORTANCE OF PRONUNCIATION WITH REFERENCE TO LANGUAGE:**

A language is a systematic means of communicating ideas by the use of sounds, gestures, signs or marks. It is the code used to express oneself and communicate to others. It is the mental faculty or power of vocal communication. Any means of communicating ideas, specifically human speech, and the expression of ideas by the voice and sounds and articulated by the organs of the throat and mouth is a language. This is a system of combining words to create meaning used by a particular group of people. Language is something specific to human, that it to say, it is the basic capacity that distinguishes human from all other living beings. Language, therefore, remains potentially a communicative medium capable of expressing ideas and concepts as well as moods, feelings and attitudes.

#### **INFLUENCE OF NATIVE LANGUAGE – ITS IMPACT ON PRONUNCIATION:**

The Language is native in the sense that the person, who identifies with it, gets his / her first cognition of the world through this language, acquires it before any other language and continues to owe allegiance to it. That is why it is also often called “Mother tongue” or “First Language”. Ideally it is Telugu in the state of Andhra Pradesh. It has typical pronunciation patterns in various districts.

The Indian Education Commission has recommended that no student should be awarded a university degree unless he / she have acquired some proficiency in English. English in India (and several other countries of South Asia and Africa) is learnt and used as a Second language. It is a second language and not a foreign language because it has become a part of

Indian national and socio – cultural reality. English is as much part of the Indian linguistic scene as any other Indian language. English is everywhere, i.e. in the administrative and bureaucratic contexts of India, its trade and commerce, its judicial set-up, and even personal communicative need. There is a constant social pressure to learn and use English and the education system is organized and structured to teach English at different stages. Indians learn English not only as a language, but also learn many subjects through English. Several of our creative writers write in English. When such a situation obtains it is different from that of a foreign Language. At the same time, English is not a first language or native language of India. Within the Indian context, they learn and use one or more Indian languages (Hindi or Tamil or Marathi or Bangla, etc). This fact makes English a second Language.

## **ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY STUDENTS OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

As many as 97% engineering graduates in the country cannot speak English, which is required for jobs in corporate sales or business consulting, revealed a new survey conducted by Aspiring minds. Engineering remains one of the most popular choices among aspirants for under-graduate courses. The survey also found that 51% of them are not employable based on their spoken English scores and of the 6 lakh engineers that graduate annually, only 2.9% candidates are the fluent while speaking English. Pronunciation and fluency were found to be major barriers in effective spoken English. The survey, conducted by Aspiring Minds, an employability evaluation and certification company, took into account almost 30,000 students across 500 engineering colleges in the country.

The findings were based on the results of students who took a test on an automated tool that measures listening and speaking skills with focus on Pronunciation. According to the results, engineers show larger gap in elements of spoken English, pronunciation and fluency. Only

6.8% engineers show ability to speak or respond spontaneously. These candidates can speak fluently, with good pronunciation and proper sentence construction. Academicians agree that not being fluent in English has posed a hurdle to many during recruitment. “Since the basis of the admission in engineering colleges is limited to maths and science, English skills which are missing right from school are not tested nor honed,” said GT Thampi, principal, Thadomal Sahani Engineering College (TSEC), Bandra. The survey also showed that while Delhi, Mumbai, Pune and Bangalore do the best in speaking in English, engineering students in AP & Telangana need maximum improvement.

“Recruiters and HR managers around the world report that candidates with English skills above the local average stand out from the crowd and garner 30-50% higher salaries than similarly-qualified candidates without English skills. The trends in India are no different,” said Varun Aggarwal, co-founder of Aspiring minds. A HR manager with Syntel said, “We employ people who are capable, however, students with good academic records as well as language skills make a good asset to the company and may also be offered a better profile.”

### **FORMATS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT)**

The history of English language teaching (ELT) is linked with developments in many fields and especially with linguistics, applied linguistics, the psychology of learning and education. ESL (English as a second language), ESOL (English for speakers of other language) and EFL (English as a foreign language) all refer to the use or study of English by speakers of other language. These terms are most commonly used in relation to teaching and learning English. ELT (English language teaching) is a widely used teacher – cantered term, as in the English language teaching divisions of large publishing houses, ELT training, etc. The abbreviations TESL (Teaching English as a second language) TESOL (Teaching English for speakers of other languages) and TEFL (Teaching English as a foreign language) are all also used. Other



terms used in this field include EAL (English as an additional language), ESD (English as a second dialect), EIL (English as an International language), ELF (English as a Lingua Franca), ESP (English for special purposes, or English as a Specific Purposes), EAP (English for Academic Purposes), and ELL (English Learner Language). A somewhat similar term, LEP (Limited English Proficiency) is also used in this field.

## **TEACHING OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO TERTIARY LEVEL STUDENTS**

Art is something expressive, creative, original and usually personal. English is an art subject in which imagination and personal taste are important. Skill is an ability to do something efficiently. For example learning the proper spelling of a word is certainly a skill. Similarly learning to speak, write, or read are definitely language skills. Language Skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are not independent. They do interact closely. Loban (1976) has found that students with low abilities in oral language were also low in reading and writing. Similarly students with adequate language abilities are good at Communication Skills. Major Skills in English are Oral Communication skills, Active Listening Skills, Reading and Writing Skills, Composition Skills, Spelling skills, Pronunciation Skills and Dictionary Skills.

As English is a skill subject the teacher should employ the following steps in Skill Instruction (Skill – based Teaching):

- Analyze the skill to be taught.
- Assess the entering behavior of the student.
- Provide training in component Skill.
- Describe and demonstrate Sub – Skills through instructional sequences.
- Provide, Contiguity, practice and feedback to the student.
- Make the student become autonomous in the Skill.

## **ENGLISH IN TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN ANDHRA PRADESH**

For students in technical education like engineering students whose mother tongue is not English, mastering English is even more important, not only for their academic life but also for their prospective career. In order to master the engineering knowledge and skills better, engineering students should own the English language competence. Most of the scientific papers or journals in the world are published in English. Most of the engineering graphs are also marked in English. Moreover, most engineering professors in various universities are also conducting their lectures in English. Hence, engineering students should at least master the Basic English ability to deal with the countless English lectures, tutorials, labs, projects and papers. Finally, they have to submit their important theses, still in English. Today's engineer has to communicate with more number of his /her counter parts across the globe and has to travel to many continents and work, away from their home country. Engineers usually work in groups. In order to understand and co-operate with their colleagues and accomplish their projects fluently, engineers have to speak good English. Text materials relating to the subjects of engineering and technology are available only in English. Considering the above facts, learning English, the universal language, as a second language becomes inseparable and unavoidable in engineering curriculum.

English is an integral part of the Engineering curriculum. It serves as a bridge between the students' years of formal study before joining Engineering and the professional life during and after Engineering that requires them to use English on a daily basis with following objectives. Every English teacher should ensure Following objectives are being met:

- To improve the student's fluency and accuracy in English as much as possible during the period of instruction.

- To develop the student's ability to hone their existing skills by using effective communication strategies throughout the instruction
- To provide an orientation to reach the expectation of the university, the college and the faculty both inside and outside of the classroom
- To prepare students to become more confident and active participants in all aspects of their undergraduate programs

The faculty of English should be highly skilled at motivating and inspiring language students. Using tried and tested syllabus, English faculty must help students to achieve their potential during the course and achieve required skills.

The English Department needs to be equipped with excellent learning facilities including a well-resourced computer aided multimedia language laboratory. In the language laboratory, the students should be given training in conversational English with emphasis on current usage in natural situations for both academic and everyday uses. Other elements of English pronunciation like basic sounds, stress, intonation and rhythm patterns, which are very important to natural-sounding speech need to be practiced. It should include training and practice in the presentation of prepared academic talks. The focus is not only on fluency but also on clear as well as effective communication. It also helps students to participate actively and effectively in group meetings, academic discussions, seminars, conferences etc.

## **CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

As perspectives on language learning and language teaching have changed, there has been a gradual shift from an emphasis on teaching and a teaching-centered classroom to an emphasis on learning and a learning-centered classroom, with special attention to the individual learner as well as the group of learners. At the same time, there has been a shift from a narrow focus

on linguistic competencies to a broader focus on communicative competencies, within which linguistic competencies (i. e., grammar, pronunciation, etc.) remain an essential component albeit only one of several critical competencies (Canale & Swain, 1980). The following significant changes in theoretical paradigms—in learning models, in linguistic models, in instructional models— inform much of the state-of-the-art work in the field today including current directions in the principles and practices of pronunciation work.

### **PRONUNCIATION TEACHING PAST AND PRESENT – 1940-90**

Not much question about it: In the 1940s, 1950s, and into the 1960s pronunciation was viewed as an important component of English language teaching curricula in both the audio lingual methodology developed in the U.S. and the British system of situational language teaching. In fact, along with correct grammar, accuracy of pronunciation was a high-priority goal in both systems. Although these two schools of language teaching developed from different traditions, as Richards and Rodgers (1986) point out, they reflected quite similar views on the nature of both language and language learning. In general, language was viewed as consisting of hierarchies of structurally related items for encoding meaning. Language learning was viewed as mastering these forms, the building blocks of the language, along with the combining rules for phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases, sentences. The pronunciation class in this view was one that gave primary attention to phonemes and their meaningful contrasts, environmental allophonic variations, and combinatory phonotactic rules, along with The 1960s, 1970s, and into the 1980s Beginning in the late 1960s and continuing through the 1970s and into the 1980s, and in quite sharp contrast to the previous period, a lot of questions were raised about pronunciation in the ESL curriculum. There were questions about the importance of pronunciation as an instructional focus, questions about whether or not it could be taught directly at all, questions about the assumption it could be

learned at all under direct instruction. The effect was that more and more programs gave less and less time and explicit attention to pronunciation; many programs dropped it entirely. While the number of textbook and teacher reference publications in other segments of the ESL curriculum increased dramatically, very little new material on pronunciation appeared. Through the 1980s and into the 1990s Beginning in the mid-1980s and continuing into the 1990s there has been a growing interest in revisiting the pronunciation component of the ESL curriculum for adults and young adults. An important part of this movement has been pronunciation developments in several ESP areas: that is, programming for specific-purpose attention to pronunciation (i.e., academic, occupational, etc.).

## **MAJOR INFLUENCES ON CHANGING PATTERNS OF PRONUNCIATION TEACHING - 2000-2020**

As noted earlier, changes in perspectives on second language learning and teaching over the past two and a half decades have impacted every facet of second language study. In the case of pronunciation, an early and rather wholesale movement in TESL toward eliminating or reducing attention to pronunciation instruction presently seems to be undergoing something of a trend reversal. Part of the reason for this may lie in the fact that it has become increasingly clear in recent years that ignoring students' pronunciation needs is an abrogation of professional responsibility. In programs for adult (and near-adult) ESL learners in particular, it is imperative that students' educational, occupational, and personal/social language needs, including reasonably intelligible pronunciation, be served with instruction that will give them communicative empowerment—effective language use that will help them not just to survive, but to succeed. Moreover, with an increasing focus on communication, has come a growing premium on oral comprehensibility, making it of critical importance to provide instruction that enables students to become, not “perfect pronouncers” of English

(which, as we shall see later is neither reasonable or necessary), but intelligible, communicative, confident users of spoken English for whatever purposes they need. Two developments have been catalysts in bringing about changes in pronunciation teaching in recent years. One is the increasing pressure of the urgent needs of special groups of ESL learners.

### **A FOCUS ON PRONUNCIATION – A FACULTY ROLE**

The basis for planning in many new programs has been to take the pronunciation class out of isolation, conceptually speaking as well as practically speaking, where it often has been set aside out of the mainstream, and to reconstitute it in both learning/teaching form and function as an integral part of oral communication. Imber and Parker (1991) present a program framework and communicative teaching ideas for “milieu-specific” pronunciation teaching which can be applied to a wide variety of ESP situations.

Knowing the importance and growing demand of English communication competence for engineering students from rural areas, there a need for the teachers as well the students to make integrated efforts.

1. Faculty is expected to fulfil their assigned responsibilities. But apart from that they should think it as their moral responsibility to take more efforts to provide more exposure to English language for students as to achieve communication competence. The students when forced to learn communication on their own, they find it as a herculean task. So, they expect assistance and warmth understanding from teachers. Now days a comprehensive course which focus on both writing and speaking skills is introduced in most of the universities. So, during the interactive sessions the students should be encouraged and helped to talk .So, that the students can built an ability to participate in various activities such as paper presentations, GD’s, mock interviews, role plays etc. to develop English communication competence. It is necessary that Students Talk Time (STT) should be higher than Teacher Talk Time (TTT).

2. Students from the secondary and higher secondary level should be given dictionary of technical words with their meanings in regional language for use. The technical teachers should help students in understanding the technical words in English and their equivalents in regional languages. Again they should help the students to understand the meanings of long and complicated sentences in technical subjects.

3. Grammar should be taught in the form of application of it in day to day life. When we learnt first language, it requires a lot of time .We get a lot of exposure to it as all our communication deals takes place in the regional language. So, it is but natural that it does not require to learn the grammar of regional language. Unfortunately it does not happen with English which is a second language. From the experience, it is essential to learn grammar of English as second language for getting confidence of speaking and performing the best in all walks of life.

4. In this modern era, new trends and methods of teaching are emerging in the learning of the English language competence which involves the use of Computer assisted language learning (CALL) in the Language Labs. Most of the students are tired of the traditional way of teaching and are more interested in doing exercises on a computer than by hand.

This system works more effectively when the ratio of computer and student is 1:1

CALL mostly includes:

4.1 Use of Audio /video clips.

4.2 Interlingual method-Listen and see clippings in regional language and English.

4.3 Language Learning-vocabulary-synonyms and antonyms.

4.4 Etymology reading.

4.5 Grammar.

4.6 Role plays-Speaking task.

4.7 Translation.

#### 4.8 Fluency Task.

By this method of learning students are provided a lot of practice and exposure to the English language. This method leads to individualization of learning, where teachers acts as mentor, trainer and aspirant to facilitate learning. The teachers should be aware of the latest technologies ,explore new ideas and have certain amount of specialization in the subject. Refresher courses for these teachers at national level can help in achieving proficiency in use of CALL.

5.Students on their own should make use of English journals, television programs, newspapers, magazines, English language Resource centres to acquire the English communication skills.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Teaching pronunciation to tertiary students poses specific challenges to the teacher in the classroom environment in the absence of well-equipped language labs. In order to improve the intelligibility of spoken English of rural students, teaching pronunciation, stress and intonation plays a crucial role. The large classrooms with varying levels of English language skills of students offer significant challenges to the language teachers and demand for innovative approaches for teaching the same. Technical applications offer some useful ways in which the Google classroom app issued in deploying assignments and monitoring the progress of students. It also analyses the specific issues and challenges faced by the teacher and the taught and suggests certain remedial measures for students to improve the intelligibility levels of their speech.

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